

# Pesticide Safety *Information*

## Worker Health and Safety Branch

### Series A

A-4

#### FIRST AID AND DECONTAMINATION

In Agricultural Settings

This leaflet provides basic first aid for employees who handle pesticides. The information supplements first aid statements found on pesticide labels. This leaflet **does not** meet the employer's requirement for emergency medical care nor for making prior arrangements for emergency medical care.

##### **If You Become Sick Working With Pesticides:**

If you become ill while working with pesticides, stop work immediately. Notify your supervisor or a fellow employee that you are ill. Take the following steps to eliminate sources of continued pesticide exposure.

- Go to a source of fresh air.
- Remove work clothing.
- Shower completely, including your hair, and change into clean clothing.
- DO NOT put contaminated clothing back on until they are properly washed.
- If shower facilities are not immediately available, use the closest available clean water source to wash your body. This may be water from a shower, faucet, hose, or bottle.

In all cases, the instructions should be: DON'T WAIT - DECONTAMINATE **IMMEDIATELY**. **Take** the person to the nearest emergency medical care facility. Do not leave the person alone or allow them to drive.



If a person collapses while working with pesticides:

- immediately remove the person from the pesticide use area
- give any necessary resuscitation
- call 911 for emergency help, if a telephone is available
- warn emergency workers that the person may be contaminated with pesticides.

**REMEMBER:** A sudden collapse may be due to a heart attack or other medical emergency not related to pesticide exposure

All persons should receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training. The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association teach CPR. Contact the local chapter of either of these organizations to make arrangements for training individuals or groups.

Take the following steps when caring for individuals who become ill while working with pesticides:

- stop exposure
- resuscitate (if necessary) and decontaminate (remove contaminated clothing and wash their skin)
- make sure the person is taken to the nearest emergency medical care facility.

It is important to supply the physician or emergency room personnel with as much information as possible regarding the circumstances of exposure. Provide the physician with the name of the pesticide the victim was exposed to or handling. If possible, take a clean copy of the product label(s) to the physician with the victim. If a label cannot be taken in with the victim, write down the exact name of the product, EPA registration number and active ingredients and give it to the physician. As a last resort, take a clean, empty, labeled container or a sealed, labeled container to the physician along with the victim. (Exposure of emergency care or hospital personnel can occur if a container with pesticides is dropped and broken.)

##### **Sudden Contamination With Pesticides:**

Pesticides can be absorbed into the body by:

- breathing in dust or vapors
- skin or eye contact
- swallowing.

Breathing Dust or Vapors. In the event of a sudden, unexpected release of pesticide dust or vapor:

- leave the area immediately
- if in an open area, go upwind at least 100 feet away from the dust or vapor
- if in a confined area, leave the area immediately and go outdoors or to a well-ventilated area away from the dust or vapor
- immediately move any person overcome by dust or vapors to an area away from the pesticides
- proceed as described for persons who suffer from sudden collapse while working with pesticides.

#### Pesticides In the Eyes.

- Immediately rinse the eyes with water.
- Hold the eyelids open and slowly pour water over the eyes.
- Never use a forceful stream of water directed into the eye, as damage may occur.
- Use water flowing slowly and gently from a faucet or hose.
- Rinse the eye for at least 15 minutes.
- If symptoms of pain, discomfort, or visual problems are present after thoroughly rinsing the eyes, immediately take the affected person to the nearest emergency medical care facility.



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#### Pesticides Are Swallowed.

- The victim should drink sips of water or milk.
- Do **NOT** induce vomiting in an unconscious or semi-alert person.
- Call 911, a physician or the nearest poison control center for further advice.
- **Check the pesticide label.** Some pesticide labels will tell you not to make the person vomit. Vomiting after swallowing caustic chemicals may make the condition worse.
- Do **NOT** give fluids to an unconscious or semi-alert person.
- Immediately take unconscious or semi-alert persons to the nearest emergency medical care facility.
- To induce vomiting in an adult, give one ounce of syrup of ipecac, if it is immediately available. To induce vomiting in children, proportionately reduce the dose of ipecac syrup (two to four teaspoonfuls). After giving syrup of ipecac, vomiting is usually delayed by 15 to 30 minutes.
- Do **NOT** administer salt water or mustard solutions to induce vomiting as may be recommended on some old pesticide labels. Salt and mustard solutions may be too dangerous to use for this purpose.



Pesticides Spilled On the Clothing or Skin. Your skin is **not** an absolute barrier that prevents pesticides from getting into your body. Pesticides (and other chemicals) can be absorbed through your skin and into your body. Absorption of some chemicals is very rapid, while absorption of others is slow. It is important to remove any pesticide that comes into contact with the body whether on your skin or clothing. Many pesticides can eventually penetrate protective clothing, even if it is waterproof. All persons should remember the following procedures.

- Immediately remove all contaminated clothing.
- Wash all exposed skin areas with soap and water.
- Properly wash contaminated clothing before wearing them again.
- If illness symptoms occur following a spill of pesticides onto the clothing or skin, immediately

#### Additional Useful Information:

Your employer must post at the work site the telephone number, address and physical location of the facility where emergency care is available.

Many areas are served by regional poison control centers; you can contact any poison control center in California by calling 1-800-764-7661. Immediate contact with the poison control center will provide professional guidance on how to proceed with first aid and resuscitation measures. Provide as much information as possible regarding what happened and the pesticides involved. If a victim is being transported to an emergency care facility, advance notification to the facility by the poison center will allow the emergency room to prepare for the victim.